

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

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PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 SY-04 SAJ-01 SAM-01 DRC-01

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R 161612Z MAY 74

FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5513

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 917

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, JO, IS

SUBJECT: ISRAELIS STRIKE AT WEST BANK COMMUNISTS

1. SUMMARY: LARGE-SCALE ISRAELI ARREST CAMPAIGN ON WEST BANK IS SAID BY KNOWLEDGEABLE ISRAELI SOURCES TO BE AIMED PRIMARILY AT COMMUNISTS. SOURCES SAY ISRAELIS KNOW OF INSTRUCTIONS FROM A COMMUNIST CAPITAL TO WEST BANK COMMUNISTS CALLING FOR SWITCH TO ACTIVE SABOTAGE AND TERRORISM. END SUMMARY.

2. ISRAELI AUTHORITIES HAVE ARRESTED HUNDREDS OF WEST BANK ARABS IN RECENT WEEKS ON SECURITY GROUNDS. EXACT FIGURES ARE HARD TO COME BY SINCE PRINCIPAL EVIDENCE OF CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN CONTINUING PROTEST FROM ARAB SIDE. ONE NOT VERY RELIABLE ARAB NEWSPAPER REPORTED 10 DAYS AGO THAT 343 HAD BEEN DETAINED SINCE KIRYAT SHIMONA INCIDENT APRIL 11. WE HEARD SUBSEQUENTLY FROM RELIABLE ISRAELI SOURCE THAT ON MAY 14 ALONE 150 HAD BEEN ARRESTED. SOME ARE APPARENTLY BEING HELD FOR SHORT PERIOD AND RELEASED, OTHERS PRESUMABLY BEING KEPT IN DETENTION.

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3. TWO KNOWLEDGEABLE ISRAELI SOURCES -- ONE OF THEM DAVID FARHI, UNTIL END OF APRIL POLITICAL ADVISOR TO WEST BANK MILITARY GOVERNOR -- HAVE TOLD US THAT CRACK-DOWN IS AIMED PRIMARILY AT COMMUNISTS. BOTH SOURCES SAY THAT ISRAELIS HAVE DROPPED GENERALLY TOLERANT ATTITUDE TOWARD COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES HERE BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE NATURE OF ACTIVITY HAS CHANGED. UNTIL RECENTLY COMMUNISTS HAVE BEEN ENGAGED PRIMARRILY AT POLITICAL LEVEL, BUT ISRAELIS BELIEVE THEY HAVE NOW BEEN INSTRUCTED TO MOVE INTO ACTIVE SABOTAGE AND TERRORISM. SOURCES REFER TO INSTRUCTIONS TO WEST BANK COMMUNISTS TO THIS EFFECT FROM "AN EASTERN EUROPEAN CAPITAL" THAT HAVE COME INTO ISRAELI HANDS. THEY CLAIM THAT RESULTING COMMUNIST OPERATIONS HAVE INCLUDED ATTACKS ON TWO ISRAELI SOLDIERS, INCENDIARY ATTACKS ON ISRAELI INSTALLATIONS IN EAST JERUSALEM, AND SOME OF RECENT SMALL-SCALE BOMB INCIDENTS IN JERUSALEM.

4. ISRAELI ARRESTS, WHICH HAVE CLEARLY INCLUDED NUMBERS OF ARABS WHO UNLIKELY TO BE COMMUNIST-ASSOCIATED, HAVE STIRRED WIDESPREAD PROTEST AMONG ARABS. ARAB PRESS COMMENTS ALMOST DAILY, WOMEN OF RAMALLAH AND NABLUS HAVE STAGED DEMONSTRATIONS, MAYORS HAVE ISSUED STATEMENTS, ETC. THE ARRESTS OF TEACHER AND TWO STUDENTS AT BIR ZEIT COLLEGE WERE PARTICULAR FOCUS OF PROTESTS.

5. COMMENT: WE HAVE NO WAY OF CHECKING ASSERTION ABOUT INSTRUCTIONS TO COMMUNISTS (EMBASSY TEL AVIV MAY). SABOTAGE ACTIVITY WOULD SEEM TO CONFLICT WITH SUPPORT BY COMMUNIST-FRONT PALESTINE NATIONAL FRONT FOR FEDAYEEN PARTICIPATION IN SETTLEMENT PROCESS. IT WOULD NOT BE FIRST TIME, HOWEVER, THAT COMMUNISTS HAVE MOVED ON MORE THAN ONE TRACK. OUR ISRAELI INFORMANTS MADE MUCH OF ARGUMENT THAT THIS NEW COMMUNIST TACK ON WEST BANK SHOWS MOSCOW'S TRUE COLORS WITH RESPECT TO SETTLEMENT EFFORTS. WE WOULD SUPPOSE, THOUGH, THAT ANY SUCH TACTIC WOULD BE RELATED MORE TO MOSCOW'S DESIRE FOR INFLUENCE IN PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT THAN TO EFFECT IT WOULD HAVE ON CHANCES FOR PEACE.
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